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## Hopes high for more doctors in Port



Port Colborne health services co-ordinator Joanne Ferracioli outside the city's group practice on Charlotte Street.

FRANK BREMAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

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# UPFRONT

## Former educational assistant jailed for possession of child porn, luring

**TONY RICCIUTO**  
Postmedia Network

A former school board educational assistant and candidate in the Port Colborne municipal election has been sentenced to six months in jail for possession of child pornography and Internet luring with a person he believed to be under 16 years of age.

Todd Albert Klacko, 47, appeared in Ontario Court of Justice in Welland on Wednesday and entered guilty pleas on both charges in front of Judge Tory Colvin.

Klacko had been employed



**TODD KLACKO**

full time as an educational assistant with District School Board of Niagara at the time of his arrest. He was suspended

from that job and later terminated.

The Internet luring offence took place between Aug. 27, 2014, and March 24, 2015.

Klacko used the Internet to

communicate with a person he believed to be under the age of 16, but he was actually communicating with Niagara Regional Police Det. Const. David Bigg, who was working undercover.

At the time the offences took place, Klacko ran as a Ward 3 candidate for Port Colborne city council.

Assistant Crown attorney Richard Monette said the accused used a computer to place an ad on the Internet. He was looking to have sex in a car. The police officer responded to the ad, pretending to be a

15-year-old male. Some pictures were exchanged and later police obtained a search warrant that was executed at a residence and a number of computer devices were seized by police.

Monette said one child pornography video and 50 child pornography images were found on a computer that was analyzed by police. All the images involved young, pre-pubescent boys in various situations.

The Crown asked for a six-month jail sentence, adding each count carries a man-

datory 90-day sentence. He also requested a forfeiture order for the material that was seized, a DNA order, and that he be placed on the sex registry for 10 years.

Defence lawyer Mark Evans said his client was of good character and with no criminal record prior to this incident. He noted Klacko was dismissed by the school board and at his age will have to find a new career.

Asked by the judge if he wanted to say anything before he was sentenced, Klacko said he made a few bad choices

that have disrupted his life and career, and it has also drastically impacted his elderly parents.

Colvin said he would give effect to the joint submission of six months in jail followed by two years of probation. Terms also include providing a DNA sample, not attending any park or place where anyone under the age of 16 may be present, and not using a computer to communicate with anyone under the age of 16.

tony.ricciuto@postmedia.ca

## Port Colborne hoping for chance to recruit physicians

**FRANKI IKEMAN**  
Postmedia Network

After months of uncertainty, Port Colborne is feeling more optimistic that it could get the funding to recruit more physicians to the city.

"In May the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care decided that certain communities would be listed as communities in need of physicians," said Port Colborne health services co-ordinator Joanne Ferraccioli.

Port Colborne was not identified on that list. The managed entry program restricts the number of physicians that can be recruited to family health organizations —



**JOANNE FERRACCIOLI**

group practices which offer several types of care where several doctors share an overhead cost.

"The business model, Ferraccioli said, is much more attractive to newer doctors than that of private practices.

Ferraccioli said not being included on the list of communities in need — which are able to recruit more — meant they couldn't recruit needed

physicians, even though the family health organization had already been approved.

"We were the last group practice to be approved so why would you approve a group practice that has the space for seven physicians and can't have any more than three," she said.

And the list of people on a waiting list for a family physician in the city is long, Ferraccioli said. At city council's meeting on February 22, Ferraccioli presented a report to council to support fighting to be included on the list.

Deputy Mayor Bea Kenney — who sits as chair on the

city's physician recruitment committee — said that she and Ferraccioli crafted a "pretty strongly worded" letter to the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant division of the Local Health Integration Network and to the ministry of health asking for support to be added to the list of communities in need.

She said they got some promising news last week, that the LHIN now recognizes Port Colborne — and Wainfleet — as communities in need of physicians, and have passed that recommendation forward to the ministry.

Kenney said the city was thrilled with the news.

"Our doctors are tapped, the doctors that we have here are tapped. They just don't have any room in their practice," she said.

Jennifer Everson, physician lead and primary care physician LHIN lead, said Port Colborne is being included in a second wave of community recommendations.

"The process hasn't changed," Everson said. "When the managed entry program first was established the LHINs were asked to look at those critical areas of high needs and that information went to the ministry. They then subsequently asked for another wave of communities."

Everson added that the LHIN recognizes that there are several communities across the province that are in need of more physicians.

"We know that there are a lot of communities across our LHIN that need new family physicians and we identified Port Colborne as one of the communities and provided this information to the ministry of health," she said.

Kenney said she expects to hear from the ministry soon about funding for new physicians.

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care Eric Hoskins was not available to comment.

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# MPs should get by with less like the rest of us

Former prime minister Pierre Trudeau famously once said something to the effect that all backbench members of parliament, once they walk one block from Parliament Hill, are a bunch of nobodies.

Maybe so. How many backbenchers can you name, other than the ones from Niagara?

But they are our nobodies, and we pay a fair bit of money to keep them in business.

The base salary for an MP these days is \$167,400 — which in many cases, is more than that person has ever earned before. Granted, the job takes them away from home for long periods and keeps them busy while they are in their home riding. But a paycheck like that makes up for a fair bit of work stress.

But that's not the total of what we spend on our parliamentary members.

This month, it was learned that after a five-year freeze, the allowances MPs receive to run their offices will be going up in April — by a lot.

Since 2010, each MP has been allotted \$288,450 per year. Next month, that will go up by an additional \$58,000 per year.

That money goes toward the cost of maintaining at least two offices (in their home riding and in Ottawa), employee salaries,



POSTMEDIA/FILE PHOTO

MPs are scheduled to receive an increase in their allowances next month.

service contracts, travel costs and other expenses.

So basically, it costs us about a half-million dollars a year, per MP.

But at some point there has to be a line where we say: No more.

With apologies to our local MPs current and former, there is some truth to Trudeau's

words.

A backbencher's travel should largely, if not completely, be confined to trips to and from his or her riding. Their office is meant to be small and while employees deserve the occasional raise like anyone else, the number of employees should be kept to a minimum.

This week, via an article by Postmedia Network reporter Ray Spiteri, we heard two takes on that.

First, St. Catharines Liberal MP Chris Bittle said "it's our job to serve our constituents and to do it as best we can." Fair enough.

But a representative for the Canadian Taxpayers Federation retorted: "I think that in this environment we are in fiscally, it will leave a bad taste in the mouths of a lot of Canadians ... and at a time that we're going to be running possibly a \$30-million deficit."

What makes the allowance increase hard to swallow is that the decision was made way back in December, but only quietly revealed pretty late last month. And the only time many people have contact with their MP is through the endless stream of mailings that clutter up our mailboxes.

Times are tight. If MPs need to make do with a little less — well, join the club.

## The church is a family of love

REV. THOMAS P. ARTH  
First Evangelical Lutheran Church

"Jesus loves me! This I know, for my mother told me so."

You may be thinking that's not the way the song goes. I know that, but for me and my guess for a lot of people, it was Mom or Dad or grandparents, maybe a Sunday School teacher or a pastor who told us Jesus loves us before we ever read it in the Bible.

And when it comes right down to it, they were all just doing what Jesus commissioned his followers to do when he left them. He told his disciples to go and make more disciples, to baptize them and teach them what he taught.

And I think the most important thing Jesus taught, more important than any rules, standards of morality, more than anything, what he taught was that we are loved by God.

To show us just how deep that love was and how far he'd go to demonstrate it, he put his life on the line and let himself be executed, crucified as a criminal, though he was innocent.

So I've been thinking about God's love. Jesus loves me! This I know.

If you're a regular reader of these I've Been Thinking columns, you might remember the last one I wrote, six weeks ago, about the deaths of David Bowie, Alan Rickman and Glenn Frey. I wrote about their creative and artistic talents and thanked God they were able to share those gifts with the world.

Shortly after that column appeared in the paper, I discovered just how far a reach this gets. Apparently, other newspapers in the Postmedia chain can pick up items from other papers.

I got a rather rickety e-mail from someone in northeast Saskatchewan, who saw my column in their local paper. According to the e-mail my column glorified sin, the gay lifestyle and the Harry Potter movies which, the writer said, are glorified Satan. How could I, as a minister, glorify the powers of darkness?

Thankfully, God can and will use sinners like me to spread the gospel message of the love we have in Christ. Jesus loves me! This I know.

Last week, I got news that a friend of mine died. She was the youngest sister of a woman who I grew up with in Sunday School, confirmation classes and youth group in the

church of my childhood and younger years. Over the years, we lost touch but reconnected in recent years through Facebook. Nicole started her own business, married and had three sons.

I was angry about her illness and death. I don't believe God causes people to get cancer as some kind of punishment. There's no one to blame for her death. But at 46, I think she was too young to die and leave her husband widowed and her boys motherless.

So I was angry with God. I think God understands, and God can take it.

And I know God loves Nicole. Jesus died for her, too. And I trust she is in God's loving embrace forever. Those who mourn her death can be comforted and can comfort one another in their sorrow with the consolation we ourselves have received from God. Jesus loves me! This I know.

I've been the pastor at First Evangelical Lutheran Church in Port Colborne for nearly 14 years. This will be my 14th Easter here. This June, I'll start my 15th year.

I know I'm not the perfect pastor. There are things I wish I could do better. I'm sure my parishioners wish I could do some things better. I try my best. I try to improve. I pray for

God's guidance and help and support.

I love the people I serve and the church I serve.

The church I serve has gone through some hard times. We've lost people we've loved over the years. In my years here, I've done 114 funerals. They weren't all people who attended church regularly or were even members of this church. But a lot of them were.

I sometimes look out into the congregation and think about some of them and where they usually sat. Others have left the church for other churches, or drifted away, or just stopped coming. I don't know if they stopped coming because of something I did or didn't do, but I miss them too.

The church is a family. Not a family of blood, but a family of love, the love of Jesus. We gather to hear the stories of God's love for each and every one of us. We share in the Holy Communion, the feast of Christ's love for us. And we go from the church to share the love of Jesus with our community and the world.

As down as I might sometimes get about this or that, I always hold on to that love, and my joy is to let others know about that love. Jesus loves me! This I know. He loves you too.

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# 'Everyone wants to visit a sugar bush'

ALLAN BENNER

Postmedia Network

The wonky winter weather this year has meant an early

start for the production of maple syrup. But it might also mean less syrup is available to pour over your pancakes.

Agape Valley Sugar Bush opened its doors for the season Saturday, welcoming hundreds of maple syrup-loving guests for tours of its syrup-making facilities and a pancake breakfast.

"It's nonstop," said administrator Guy Hartwick, who was one of a team of volunteers preparing hundreds of pancakes for guests. "People were lined up at opening time today, which is wonderful."

Although the early spring this year is helping bring people to the sugar bush, Guy's husband, Tim, said it might not bode well for syrup production.

On Feb. 12, volunteers drilled about 1,500 taps into about 600 sugar maple trees, and syrup production began at the Kilman Road sugar bush operated by Niagara Shorthills Christian Ministries.

"I think we probably could have started a week earlier, but it's just not normal to start that early," he said, noting it might mean an early end to the season.

"The week that's coming

looks good, except I think that will be it. We aren't getting any more cold nights. It looks warm for the next two weeks straight."

Ideal conditions for syrup making are sub-zero overnight temperatures followed by warm and sunny days — but not too warm.

"Three to five degrees (Celsius) is really nice," he said.

Normally, the sugar bush produces about 1,800 litres of syrup, but Tim said he'll be surprised if Agape Valley can produce half that much.

"Unless the temperature starts dropping again, (the syrup-making season) could be over," he said.

But he isn't worried.

Last year, conditions were ideal, and there is plenty of maple syrup left over.

"It was perfect," he said. "We have lots of syrup in the freezer, and we just keep processing it... but this year I'm a little concerned."

Guy said it takes as many as 60 volunteers to run the facility when guests arrive, but there's rarely a shortage of



ALLAN BENNER/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Grace Gallo looks for sap in a collection bucket at Agape Valley. The sugar bush opened its door for the season on Saturday.

people willing to help out.

"It's really great. We have ages from 14 to the late 80s. Volunteers of all ages," she said, adding volunteers come from five different area churches as well as high schools.

"Even the high school kids want to come and get their community service hours. We're just blessed that way," she said.

Considering how busy Agape Valley is becoming, the volunteers are crucial.

"Every year, we get busier

and busier," Tim said. "We're so maxed out now with all the people coming through. Everyone wants to visit a sugar bush."

"People just want to come out and enjoy it."

The sugar bush is open every Saturday in March from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., during March break from March 14 to 18, and on Good Friday, March 25, from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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# LOCAL NEWS

## PC leader slams Liberals for 'attack on small-town hospitals'

ALLAN BENNER  
Postmedia Network

Efforts to save Welland's hospital have apparently gained an unexpected ally.

Provincial Progressive Conservative party Leader Patrick Brown accused the Liberal government of "gutting" health care in Ontario, and cited plans to close Welland's hospital as an example.

"Beyond the cuts to nursing, what we're seeing is an attack on small-town hospitals," Brown told Premier

Kathleen Wynne, prior to the release of the province's 2016 budget last Thursday.

"I look at the news coming out of Welland where they're worried — very worried that they're going to lose their hospital given what we're hearing from the Ministry of Health."

A day earlier, Brown issued a statement calling it "disappointing that in proceeding with plans to close the Welland hospital the Liberal government has not taken into account concerns related to the future health needs of

south Niagara's communities."

He said the Liberal government "should commit to an extensive consultation process before implementing its plans any further." Although Brown has not gone so far as to say his party would reverse plans to close Welland's hospital, Mayor Frank Campion called the support "very encouraging."

"I'm glad he's taken that to heart for us. The more people we have on our side the better off we are," Campion said.

"I'm not surprised that they were made and I'm certainly grateful that they were made."

Campion called Brown's statement "refreshing" compared to previous party leadership.

"It's a new leadership," he said. "They're organizing with a new focus. I think they're trying to reinvent the party."

Campion has been a long-time supporter of the Progressive Conservative party and ran as a PC candidate in the last provincial election under the leadership of Ni-

agara West-Glanbrook MPP Tim Hudak.

Welland's mayor said he was discouraged by the lack of support for Welland hospital demonstrated by the party leadership during the 2014 campaigns.

"I certainly had some disagreements with Mr. Hudak on the hospital portfolio which caused a lot of friction between us," he said.

Hudak said he still believes the communities deserves a new modern hospital.

"I've made my point of view clear that south Niagara deserves a modern and new hospital that is going to attract

specialists and provide better care and a better home for the outstanding staff that we have there," he said.

"I know from talking to the mayors myself, that they have a concern about what would remain in Welland and setting up clinics and such, but now I think that the fact that Patrick would like to hear directly their concerns and see that they're treated with the respect they deserve is a good move by him."

Brown couldn't be reached for comment in recent days.

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Ontario Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown.

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JOSHUA TRINE / WENN.COM

Theresa Caputo

## Long Island Medium sees Niagara in her future

TV's Long Island Medium is heading to the Meridian Centre.

Theresa Caputo, a self-proclaimed medium on the TLC reality series since 2012, shares personal stories and will explain how her "gift" works on June 20 at 7:30 p.m. She will also involve the audience to — according to a Meridian Centre press release — "give people comfort knowing that their loved ones who passed away are still with them, just in a different way."

The show, titled Live! The Experience, will include large video projection.

Caputo has appeared on The Tonight Show, Dr. Oz, and The Today Show. Her second book, *You Can't Make This Stuff Up*, was released in 2014.

Despite her claims, Caputo's psychic abilities have been dismissed by sources such as *Inside Edition*, *Wired Magazine* and the James Randi Educational Foundation, a non-profit group that debunks psychic and paranormal claims.

Tickets go on sale March 11 at 10 a.m. and start at \$39.75 — which does not guarantee a reading. For more information go to [www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca).

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**NATIONAL POST**

**THE TRIBUNE**

## Investigator for children's aid societies 'a good thing'



BOB TYMCZYK/SUN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Executive director Chris Steven is pictured in 2013 outside Family and Children's Services Niagara's St. Catharines offices.

**KARENA WALTER**  
Postmedia Network

A new provincial investigator unit overseeing children's aid society matters should be beneficial, says the executive director of Family and Children's Services Niagara.

Chris Steven said anything that assists the government and the public in understanding and improving services to children is a good thing.

"We have to have some confidence that our provincial politicians and the government have weighed the benefits of this and concluded that this is going to be something that will be helpful in the long run," he said last Thursday.

The Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth received legislative authority on March 1 to investigate matters involving individual children and groups of children served by children's aid societies, as well as those placed by a society with a residential licensee.

Investigations can include child deaths and critical injuries.

A person with a complaint must go through other channels before the office will consider launching an investigation, such as the local children's aid society and the province's Child and Family Services Review Board.

When the provincial advocate's investigative unit takes on a case, it will release a public report with findings and recommendations.

Ann Godfrey, director of development and public relations for FACS Niagara, said the work FACS does is very sensitive and difficult and it's not surprising there are points of contention.

"For us, it's definitely the commitment to be fair and to be compassionate but at the same time fulfil our obligation to keep kids safe and support families to the best of our ability," she said.

See FACS on next page

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# LOCAL NEWS

## System is now in place to deal with complaints

### From previous page

Godfrey said the agency wants to be helpful and supportive of families, but it's also working with the best interests of the children. She said not everybody always agrees on the best way to get to that end.

"These are big issues in people's lives and we know it's important for people to be heard," she said. "It's important to sort through these matters so everybody feels that they've had a fair hearing and at the end of the day we're able to establish some common goals."

FACS Niagara provides links and websites to clients on how to make complaints.

The majority are handled informally through normal relationships between the families and youth and their case workers or supervisors.

Steven said FACS does examine whether its agency may have to revisit its thinking or decisions on some matters.

"It would not be correct for us to think we always have it right and that's the importance of having these processes," he said.

FACS Niagara also has a formal written complaints system, for which an internal panel will review a matter. The panel provides decisions in writing to the complainant.

It can't deal with matters before the courts or interfere in judge's decisions.

Complainants who aren't satisfied with the FACS Niagara panel decision can go to the Child and Family Services Review Board of Ontario. They can also decide to skip the formal process at FACS and go directly to the board, which is based in Toronto but holds hearings locally.

Family and Children's Services Niagara said it received 17 formal internal complaints in 2015. Eleven were resolved

at the local level, with some complaints accepting FACS' reasons and others leading FACS to do something differently.

Two of the complaints proceeded to the provincial board and the rest were withdrawn.

For more information: provincialadvice@ontario.ca  
Children and youth seeking services can call advocate: 1-800-263-2841

### FACS NIAGARA BY THE NUMBERS

**4,656 families** — number served in 10 months from April 2015 to January 2016

**9,626 children** — number seen due to concerns about care and safety, but not all found in need of protection

"It's a relatively small number given the volume of cases we deal with in a year," Steven said, adding FACS Niagara has 1,500 family files open at any one time and another 500 for children in care. "There are thousands of investigations."

The two complaints that went to the board were joined by 11 others that went directly there, skipping the FACS Niagara internal process.

Eight of the 13 were resolved at the pre-hearing stage, one was not eligible and four are still open.

Steven said the agency has worked with the office of the provincial advocate for children and youth in the past in its advocacy role. It's led to some good recommendations they've been able to implement, he said.

Steven said the only con-

cern with the new investigative unit is what it will mean for staff time without additional resources if they are

involved in an investigation. He said investigations can be very detailed and time- and resource-consuming because

of the importance of the work. He questioned if there will be another way of economizing, like being given relief from

some of the other oversight mechanisms.

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# LOCAL NEWS

## Sitel adding 250 St. Catharines jobs

DON FRASER

Postmedia Network

Sitel is hiring 250 full-time workers at its St. Catharines call centre.

"This is actually the result of great performance for existing clients we have," said Glenn McCormack, director at the Ontario Street site that currently employs 850 people.

"The clients we're doing business with ... are very pleased with the work being performed out of the site, and they're offering additional work," McCormack said. "And so that requires additional employees."

The jobs are all in-bound, customer care work for clients in the telecommunications industry.

McCormack said the hiring spurt started about three weeks ago and ends at the end of April.

In a release, Sitel noted it has been in the Garden City for 15 years. It celebrated that anniversary last Monday.

"In the 15 years we've been in St. Catharines, aside from the initial startup, this is one of the biggest jumps that we've had," McCormack said.

Expansion is "always a possibility," he added. "We've talked about where the clients

want to go and the amount of work they want to give to us.

"And as far as the site is concerned, we're looking at the configuration to see if we can engineer a way to add additional seats so we can take on more business."

McCormack said the basic starting rate is \$11.75 an hour, plus bonuses and shift premiums. The average employee at the site is making \$13.50 to \$14 an hour. Sitel also offers a full benefits package.

"Many of the Sitel management and the support staff are promoted from within. Very rarely do we go outside for any of these positions," he said.

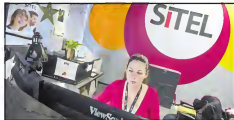
"As we grow, these opportunities become more abundant."

City of St. Catharines economic development manager Brian York said the hiring is great, fantastic news.

"We continue to see growth from Sitel, year after year," York said.

"And there's a strong commitment from that company to hire and train their workers (and promote) them into management. That's very rewarding for both the employees and the community."

York said the city has a longstanding relationship



BOB TYMCZYSZYN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

The Sitel call centre based on Ontario Street in St. Catharines is looking to expand its workforce by about 250 positions.

with company management "and we hear them validate the story of 'I started at the floor, now I'm in a management role and this is a great company to work for'."

Sitel said people who are interested in available positions may apply at the

"Careers" tab of [www.sitel.com](http://www.sitel.com).

Previous customer service experience and strong computer knowledge are preferred.

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## Nicholson calls for creation of national dementia strategy



NICK DICATIST/POSTMEDIA NETWORK FILE PHOTO

Niagara Falls Conservative MP Rob Nicholson, pictured, and Liberal MP Robt Oliphant are coming together on a bipartisan bill to combat Alzheimer's and dementia.

**RAY SPITERI**  
Postmedia Network

Dementia does not discriminate between political parties.

A private member's bill introduced by Niagara Falls Conservative MP Rob Nicholson, seconded by Don Valley West Liberal MP Robt Oliphant calling on a national dementia strategy is being hailed as a bi-partisan achievement.

More than 700,000 Canadians currently suffer from Alzheimer's and other related dementias. It is expected to affect 1.4-million Canadians in 15 years and will cost \$293 billion a year by 2040.

"It calls on the provinces and all stakeholders to develop a plan to co-operate in finding a cure and dealing with the challenges of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias," said Nicholson as he introduced Bill C-233 for the first time.

He also credited former Nickel Belt NDP MP Claude Gravelle for raising the issue in the past.

"There is probably no family in the country that can say it has not in some way been hurt by these particular diseases. We know they are increasing.

"As we know, as the population increases, the word is that this is going to increase."

The bill could be up for a second reading vote in the next few weeks, he told Postmedia Network.

Nicholson said his father died from Alzheimer's disease in 1997 and he regularly hears about cases in his community.

"I'm quite familiar with the disease," he said. "There's no, real national strategy with respect to Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. This is a good way to raise awareness and increase the level of support and agreement on this issue."

The bill has the support of a number of stakeholders, particularly the Alzheimer

Society of Canada.

"The society described the bill as a positive step towards curbing the social, economical and personal costs of a disease that still has no cure or effective treatment.

"We're thrilled that parties are working together so soon after the election to address the urgency of dementia," said Mimi Lowi-Young, the society's chief executive officer.

"We all need to get behind this bill. We strongly believe that a national dementia strategy that focuses on research, prevention and improved care is the only solution to tackling the devastating impact of this disease."

Lowi-Young said the society is ready to collaborate with federal, provincial and territorial partners to "make this a reality."

According to society research, 83 per cent of Canadians have said they want a national dementia strategy.

The society is asking the government to create a Canadian Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Partnership that would bring together researchers, clinicians, health-care providers and private industry to work alongside Canadians impacted by the disease to develop and implement the strategy.

Nicholson said there's no simple solution, but politicians and stakeholders can "bring as much publicity to this as possible." He said the administration and delivery of health care services is the responsibility of each province and territory. But he hopes a national strategy would see provinces and territories work even more collaboratively and lead to less duplication in strategies and research.

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Twitter: @RaySpiteri

## LOCAL NEWS

# New act could mean waste changes

MARYANNE FIRTH  
Postmedia Network

Changes could be coming to the way waste is handled in Niagara.

The Waste-Free Ontario Act is moving through the legislative process and could soon introduce waste diversion strategies across the province.

Catherine Habermehl called it a much-needed move for the province as she spoke to a room of more than 30 inquiring minds from the public and private sector at Best Western in St. Catharines last Tuesday. The director of waste management services for Niagara Region was one of three guest speakers at Putting Waste in Its Place, an educational seminar hosted by Niagara Sustainability Initiative.

"We need this. Our diversion rates are stagnant," Habermehl said of Bill 151, which has the potential to be passed before the year is out. Ontario's overall diversion rate sits at 47 per cent.

Despite ongoing efforts to educate the public about waste diversion, garbage bag contents in Niagara still include 50 per cent green bin materials, Habermehl said.

"That's where we need to focus our attention, not just in Niagara, but across Ontario."

The proposed legislation, which recently had its second reading, "intends to shift to a circular economy" that further emphasizes reducing, reusing and recycling, she said.

While it's unknown at this point what role municipalities will play under the new act, substantial changes are likely.

"Municipalities may not be in this business anymore," Habermehl said, adding the responsibility of curbside pickup and waste processing could be transitioned into the hands of the private sector.

The act, to be introduced over several years, will shift the cost of waste diversion from municipalities to producers, and from taxpayers to consumers.

Producers, Habermehl said, will be responsible for the cost of diverting or disposing of packaging and products at the end of their lifespan.

The focus will include electronics, tires,

hazardous waste and blue box materials.

The change is intended to drive businesses to create products that last longer, are reusable and more easily recycled.

The industrial, commercial and institutional sector has been largely ignored when it comes to waste diversion strategies, Habermehl said, calling the gap a "huge opportunity" to improve environmental impact within the province.

She believes more programs and incentives should be available to assist these organizations in creating successful diversion methods — an approach Niagara Region is looking into.

To give public and private-sector representatives an idea of how to introduce waste diversion strategies in the workplace, Victoria Brzozowski outlined how her team was able to create change at St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton.

The sustainability and waste program co-ordinator said that success did not come without challenges, but gave tips for overcoming obstacles that organizations may encounter.

It begins with the creation of a formal program to target waste diversion and then continues on with consistent education and engagement, Brzozowski said.

The program at St. Joseph's targeted improvement in recycling, transitioning to reprocessible items and introducing a communications campaign to get the word out to staff, patients and visitors. St. Joseph's has improved to a 46 per cent diversion rate this year from a 37 per cent diversion rate in 2013.

To give insight on how to assess waste management at an organization, Niagara College sustainability co-ordinator Taryn Wilkinson provided the audience with a brief overview of how to conduct a waste audit. Workshops offering more detailed advice will be set up through NSI at a later date, she said.

Organizations interested in creating a waste management plan can contact Niagara Sustainability Initiative for guidance. For more information, visit [niagarasustainability.org](http://niagarasustainability.org).

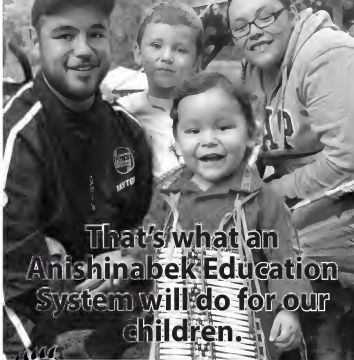
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MARYANNE FIRTH/POSTMEDIA NETWORK  
Catherine Habermehl, director of waste management services for Niagara Region, was one of three guest speakers at Putting Waste in Its Place, an educational seminar hosted by Niagara Sustainability Initiative in St. Catharines.

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## Masswohl passes torch to former client

ALLAN BENNER

Postmedia Network

Claire Masswohl doesn't have to go far before she meets someone who she has helped in one way or another.

Visiting the hairdresser last Friday morning, she said the young woman who styled her blonde hair told Masswohl she owes her job to Employment Solutions, an organization run by the Welland Heritage Council and Multicultural Centre.

"She went through the second career program through Employment Solutions to get her hairdressing and esthetician licence," Masswohl said.

Employment Solutions also covered the \$500 cost for an additional program that allowed the woman to get the job at the hairdresser's shop.

"That makes me feel good, when I'm out there in the community and I see people who are successful because of the work that we do," she said.

It happens a lot.

In the 40 years since the multicultural centre was founded by Masswohl's mother, Yvette Ward, thousands of people were given a fresh start in Canada because of the work they have done.

"To have two people from the same family who have run an organization for 40 years, it's almost unheard of across Canada," said Masswohl, who took over running the organization 23 years ago after her mother's retirement.

Now Masswohl has passed the reins of the organization to one of the many people she herself assisted during her long career.

"I feel honoured," said Janet Madame, the multicultural centre's new executive director. "To step in right after there are huge shoes to fill."

Madame arrived at the Peace Bridge in Port Erie in September 2005 with her husband, their two children, her brother and his family, hoping to finally find a place they could call home.

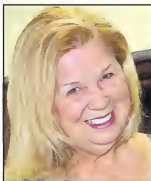
They'd left Zimbabwe in the late 1980s, and spent six years living in the U.S. before arriving in Niagara, where they soon met Masswohl and multicultural centre staff who helped them settle in their new country.

Not long after her arrival, Madame began volunteering for the Canada Revenue Agency, the Red Cross and the multicultural centre, wanting to give back to the country that had welcomed her family.

She also eventually returned to her education and became an accountant. Madame was ultimately hired as the multicultural centre's finance manager in 2007.

While it's difficult to leave the job behind, Masswohl said she feels comforted knowing the multicultural centre is in "phenomenal hands."

"I am so thrilled," she said. "It made leaving extremely easy, because we had the opportunity to work with such



CLAIRE MASSWOHL

fantastic staff — just amazing people — over the years."

Masswohl said she has been grooming Madame to take over during the past few years, sending her to meetings to allow her to get acquainted with others working in the immigration industry.

Even then, Masswohl said it took a bit of convincing before Madame felt confident enough to step up.

"I told her, you know everything about this place," Masswohl recalled. "There's not a thing you don't know. You've come through all the hardships with us, you've come through the good times."

Despite her retirement, Masswohl plans to stay as active as possible.

"I love to travel," she said. "I'm going to explore Ecuador to see if I'd like to stay there for part of the year."

She's also planning a trip to Canada's East Coast.

"And I've got a few things on the burner I'd like to start doing. I'm a social worker, after all, and there are lots of things that need to be addressed within our community," she said.

Masswohl also plans to "stay on in a very low capacity" at the multicultural centre, offering any assistance she can as Madame faces the challenges to come.

Looking back, Masswohl said she's "very proud of the work that we've done and what we've accomplished."

One accomplishment she's particularly proud of is the success of Employment Solutions, the same program that helped her hairdresser get her job.

It evolved out of the multicultural centre's Canadian Access for International Professions and Skilled Trades, a program launched nine years ago to help immigrants with a professional background become certified to work in Canada.

Masswohl said government funding for the program has been steadily increasing over the years "because our outcomes and outputs are so phenomenal."

ABenner@postmedia.com  
Twitter: @benner1

# College boosts HR offerings

Niagara College is expanding its business program with a new bachelor's degree in human resources.

The program, to open in the college's school of business and management in September, will offer a mix of theoretical learning and hands-on experience to an anticipated 40 enrolled students.

It will also offer course-based applied research, opportunities for studies abroad, and networking with industry professionals and connections to industry associations.

Its curriculum aligns with the Human Resources Professionals Association requirements for both the certified human resources professional (CHRP) and certified human resources leader designations.

Vivian Kinnaird, Niagara College's dean of business, hospitality and environment, said the college also offers bachelor of business administration degrees in hospitality and in international commerce and global development.

"So we've already got a bit of traction and experience in

running degree programs," Kinnaird said.

"And we thought a bachelor of business administration-human resources degree would be a nice complement."

"It's part of a family of related degrees."

Kinnaird said the college's business school also

has "quite an established community of practitioners in human resources management," who referred also to the college's three-year diplomas and a graduate certificate in HR management.

"They have links to industry, the CHRP and the local human resources professional organization, and a

lot of those people are on our program advisory committee," she said.

Kinnaird said the college also runs a club called "HR at NC" ... "And we really do celebrate the opportunities to students to grow and develop as human resources practitioners and professionals."

Secondary students cur-

rently enrolled in a specialist high skills major in business, and who are accepted into the program, may also be eligible for a \$1,000 scholarship.

Further details are available at [www.niagaracollege.ca/shsm](http://www.niagaracollege.ca/shsm).

Continued on next page



Vivian Kinnaird, Niagara College's dean of business, hospitality and environment.

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# College boosts HR offerings

## From previous page

The offer is available for students who confirm their acceptance by March 26.

## Tech skills put to test

District School Board of

Niagara's annual technological skills challenges are underway.

More than 500 students from across the region are competing in 30 contests, structured to provide student preparation in skilled trades

and technologies.

Technology Challenge Week began with about 150 students participating in "elementary technology" preliminaries at seven design, science and technology centres throughout the board.

The "techno-knowledge" finals will be held in the DSNB Education Centre atrium on Friday.

Secondary school technological skills challenges will be held in partnership with Niagara College at the Welland,

Niagara-on-the-Lake and Maid of the Mist (Niagara Falls) campuses.

Top three finalists from each challenge will be recognized at an event on April 13 at Club Italia in Niagara Falls. Gold medal champions will

represent DSNB at the Skills Ontario provincial finals at RIM Park in Kitchener May 2 to 4.

For tips and releases to Don Fraser's Chalkboard Niagara education column, e-mail him at donfraser@postmedia.com.

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# LOCAL NEWS

## College manufacturing centre nearing completion

FRANKI IKEMAN  
Postmedia Network

Niagara College is preparing to open its 15,000-square-foot Walker Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre, scheduled for completion this spring.

The new building will specialize in advanced manufacturing, such as 3D scanning and printing, and will house the college's research and innovation division.

"What the building means to us is an expansion of the operations that we currently have," said centre manager James Lambert. "We have been engaging industry now for more than two years and using advanced manufacturing technologies to make SMEs (small- and medium-sized enterprise) in the area more competitive in the marketplace."

Student employees and faculty work in the research and innovation division on projects with industry partners and provide services such as producing and testing prototypes, looking at new technologies and developing new or improved products for small- and medium-sized businesses.

The advanced manufacturing side has really outgrown its current space, said Marc Nantel, associate vice-president of research and innovation.

"It was about five years ago that we started in earnest to look at advanced manufacturing as a way to help industry on the research and innovation front," Nantel said. "And we secured one lab at first in the Rankin technology building — it's the lab with all the equipment — but it became too small, so then we secured the other lab but it also again became too small because there's a lot of demand."

Both Nantel and Lambert said that manufacturing in Niagara has changed, but it's still here.

"Manufacturing in Niagara, in the region, is still very much alive. It doesn't look the same as it did 15 to 20 years ago, but what has risen up from the ruins are these small- and medium-sized enterprise all



FRANKI IKEMAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Architect Steve Done from Architects Tillmann Ruth Robinson gives a media tour of the Walker Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre at Niagara College's Welland campus, last Tuesday.

providing value to the supply chain, all wanting to be competitive, all wanting to be innovative and entrepreneurial, and sometimes just looking for a little bit of help," Lambert said.

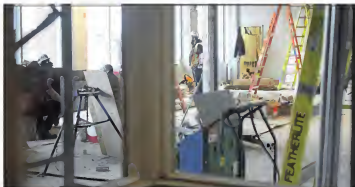
The new building is space for the programs to grow into, with several labs, offices, conference rooms and flexible labs that can be rented out by companies.

"It's going to be a game-changer for us," Nantel said. "What we try to do is have great professional development for our teachers, great education for our students

and great new products for our industry partners."

Ground broke on the Walker Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre in March, 2015. The province invested \$4.2 million towards the building and the Walker family and Walker Industries Holdings Ltd. contributed \$1.2 million.

FRANKI IKEMAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK  
Workers are seen during a media tour of the Walker Advanced Manufacturing Innovation centre at Niagara College.



# Witch hazels — harbingers of spring



**THERESA FORTE**

**A**bsorbed in the moment, I focused my camera lens on a stem of witch hazel blooms, tweaked the settings and finally clicked the shutter, totally unaware a couple was standing next to me.

The husband stepped forward. "Birds?" he wondered what had captured my eye.

"Witch hazels," I replied, motioning toward the wispy yellow blooms just beyond the fence. "They are one of the first flowers to appear in the spring."

The pair nodded and smiled, and then continued on their way.

Many visitors to Niagara Parks Botanical Garden were enjoying a casual stroll through the park on this unseasonably warm afternoon, others were on a mission — looking for signs of spring.

Our native eastern witch hazels typically bloom in the fall, while the hybrid *intermedia* witch hazels (a cross between the Japanese and Chinese species) bloom in the late winter, usually February through March and are welcome harbingers of spring. Bloom times vary from year to year depend-

ing on the variety and the weather. The spring blooming hybrids have larger flowers, showy fall leaf colour, but are not as fragrant as other varieties.

The healing properties of witch hazel have been known for hundreds of years. North American natives used the bark to treat sores, twigs were boiled in water and the extract was used to soothe aching muscles, and a infusion of the leaves was used to treat cuts, bruises and insect bites.

The genus name *bhamamelis* comes from the Greek words 'hama' meaning at the same time and 'melen' meaning apple or fruit, recognizing the fact that the fruit and flowers appear at the same time on the fall blooming varieties. Seeds are dispersed with a pop as they mature; the seed can be flung up to nine metres from the source, if the wind is right.

Witch hazels are easy to grow. Offer them medium moisture, well-drained soils and full sun to part shade. Best flowering is in full sun. Leaf scorch may occur during periods of summer drought if the moisture is not consistent. Shrubs have some tolerance for clay soils as long as soil drainage is good.

Promptly remove root suckers to prevent colonial spread. Prune in spring after flowering to control shape and size. Disease and insects rarely pose a serious problem, although caterpillars



**THERESA H. FORTE/SPKAL, TO POSTMEDIA NETWORK**

*Bhamamelis x intermedia* 'Arnold Promise' beginning to unfurl her showy petals on the west lawn beside Niagara Parks Commission's butterfly conservatory.

and Japanese beetles may chew on the leaves. Deer resistant.

Witch hazels provide valuable late winter interest in a shrub border or as a small tree in a suburban garden. They have attractive summer foliage and good fall colour. Once established, branches may be cut for arrangements to brighten the winter table.

*Bhamamelis mollis*, commonly called Chinese witch hazel, is an open, upright medium to large shrub that will reach three to 4.5 metres tall at maturity, with a rounded shape. It is native to forests of southern China. This species is said to produce the most fragrant flowers of all the witch hazels.

Long, wispy petals radi-

ate from a central red calyx. In mid-January, I captured my first Chinese witch hazel blooms of the season in the woodland garden at the NPBG, that same tree is now in full bloom and has probably been flowering for the past month.

*Bhamamelis x intermedia* hybrids are crosses between Japanese witch hazel (*H. japonica*) and Chinese witch hazel (*H. mollis*). They typically have a loosely-branched form and will reach three to six metres tall and wide. Their spidery, often fragrant, mid-to late winter flowers line the bare stems well before the spring foliage appears. The shrubs have good summer foliage, later developing interesting

fall colouring.

'Arnold Promise' is an upright, vase-shaped cultivar with a spreading habit. Reaching four metres tall, it makes an attractive tree for a suburban garden. 'Arnold Promise' offers sweetly fragrant flowers and later bloom than most of the other *intermedia* cultivars. The crinkled, ribbon-like petals were just beginning to unfurl on Sunday afternoon when I visited the gardens. A velvety orange-red calyx punctuates the centre of each blossom. Broad-oval, green leaves offer summer interest, and turn attractive shades of yellow-orange to yellow in the fall.

An introduction of the Arnold Arboretum in Boston. 'Arnold Promise' witch

hazels are blooming now on the west lawn beside the butterfly conservatory.

*Bhamamelis x intermedia* 'Westerstede' is a yellow-flowered form with upright branching. This shrub will typically reach to 2.5 to 3.5 metres tall. The winter-blooming, mildly fragrant, yellow flowers (to 2.5 centimetres long) have four, narrow, ribbon-like petals that are straight rather than crinkly. Clusters of these flowers bloom along the stems any time from mid-February to the end of March. Broad-oval, green leaves turn bright yellow in fall. *Westerstede* witch hazels are flowering now beside the landscaped pond at the botanical gardens.

If your home garden could use a spark of late winter interest, a witch hazel might just fill the bill. There are many varieties available, look for witch hazels with distinctive flowers and exceptional fall leaf colours to really make the most of your investment. Purchase witch hazels early in the season at the garden centre, they are usually sold out by late spring. Given a moist, well drained soil, a sunny site (a little afternoon shade won't hurt) and witch hazels will reward you with cheerful yellow flowers to warm the last days of winter.

Theresa Forte is a local garden writer, photographer and speaker. You can reach her by calling 905-381-7940 or by e-mail at [theresa\\_forte@sympatico.ca](mailto:theresa_forte@sympatico.ca).

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